

Communicating the Good News!

Using the Purdue/Horatio Alger Study to Document the FFA Edge

1. Introduction

FFA and agricultural education received good news this year when a major research study by Purdue University highlighted aspects of the comparative edge FFA members enjoy over the “typical high school student.” The study of FFA and non-FFA agricultural education students utilized selected findings about the general U.S. school population from a 1999 research report, The State of Our Nation’s Youth, published by the Horatio Alger Association.

The key findings of the Purdue study provide valuable information to help communicate the differential value of the agricultural education/FFA program. Opportunities to use this information includes recruitment efforts with students and parents; meetings with administrators, guidance counselors and school boards; funding requests of key community sponsors or industry groups; speeches; and many others. The news media are an excellent audience for the information.

This guide and the accompanying materials available for downloading have been prepared to help teachers, state staff and other agricultural education professionals present this important information to key audiences.

They include:

Background on the Purdue and Horatio Alger studies

Overview

Three downloadable PowerPoint presentations with speaker’s notes for:

- Students and Parents
- Sponsors
- Partners

Key messages derived from the Purdue Study

National News Release

2. The Horatio Alger Association Report

Founded in 1947, the Horatio Alger Association is a non-profit organization that seeks to “motivate and educate the nation’s youth about the economic and personal opportunities afforded them by the promise of the American free enterprise system.” The association produces seminars, scholarship programs, teacher resources, publications and awards to promote its goals. The State of Our Nation’s Youth is an annual national survey of the attitudes and beliefs of American teenagers. The 1999 report was used for comparison in the Purdue University study. More information on the Horatio Alger Association can be found at www.horatioalger.com.

3. The Purdue University Study

In 1999, Dr. Mark A. Balschweid and Dr. B. Allen Talbert of Purdue University conducted a random survey of FFA and non-FFA agricultural education students to identify similarities and differences between these students and the “typical student” composite reported in the Horatio Alger study. Their findings provide important insights and supporting evidence to communicate the value of

agricultural education enrollment and FFA participation. The results also have implications regarding involvement of students in FFA and supervised agricultural experience programs.

The Purdue study, “A Comparison of Agricultural Education Students to the ‘Typical High School Student’ As quantified in The State of Our Nation’s Youth: by the Horatio Alger Association,” was issued in the spring of 2000. In addition to the “good news” about FFA membership, it contained recommendations for the National FFA Organization and agricultural education. These are in the process of being shared and considered.

4. Key Findings from the Purdue Study

The central observation drawn from the Purdue study’s comparison of FFA members with the general student population is that:

Agricultural education students who are also FFA members possess attitudes and exhibit behaviors indicating they benefit more from their personal, academic and career experiences during school than the general student population.

This theme is supported by three key messages and corresponding data:

1. FFA members are more enthusiastic about and attach greater value to their school studies than the average student.

- FFA members are more actively engaged in school and community activities.
- FFA members are more likely to believe that the harder they study the more opportunities they’ll have after graduation.
- FFA members felt that their agriculture courses were much more challenging, interesting and exciting than typical students felt about their classes in general.

2. FFA members are more likely than the average student to relate personal effort to success and believe it is important do their best.

- FFA members are more likely to believe the amount of work they do in school is important to their success later in life.
- FFA members are more likely to believe it is important to do their best in all of their classes.

3. FFA members are preparing for post-secondary studies in slightly higher numbers and have more sharply defined career objectives than the average student.

- FFA members are slightly more likely to attend two-year and four-year colleges.
- FFA members are much more likely to identify a career goal in agriculture.
- FFA members are more likely to identify a specific career rather than a general field.
- FFA members and non-FFA agriculture students are more likely to be employed while in high school.

5. PowerPoint Presentations

Three PowerPoint presentations have been prepared to assist in communicating the “good news” of the Purdue study to parents and students; partners; and industry sponsors. While similar in content, each of the presentations has been fine-tuned for its particular audience. Each relates the mission and

purpose of FFA and helps communicate a broader understanding of the organization, its teachers and its student members.

Download the Files

The presentations can be downloaded from the website: www.ffa.org/news/alger.html. Simply follow the download instructions on the page, selecting the appropriate files for Windows or Mac platforms. Each file is approximately 1.7 MB in size and will take about ten minutes to receive via a 56K modem.

The PowerPoint files are compatible with Office 97 for Windows and Office 98 for Mac.

Presentation Scripts

Each of the PowerPoint slide shows contains speaker's notes that have much of the information for the presentation. Once in PowerPoint, the script can be seen by selecting the "Notes" view. Print out a copy of each slide along with its notes page to secure the full script. The narrative may be adjusted to suit the needs of a particular audience, but the messages and data should be related in a manner consistent with the existing script. Doing so will ensure the information is presented accurately and avoid misinterpretation.

Customizing the Presentation

The PowerPoint presentations can be customized by creating new slides and adding local or state information. For a smooth and consistent presentation, use the existing master slide as the basis for new ones, and match as closely as possible the type styles and colors.

6. News Release

A news release issued by the National FFA Organization about the Purdue study is also available for downloading. It can be shared electronically or in hard copy with local media, administrators, key audiences and others. It's useful for creating additional visibility for the information.

7. Contact Information

For questions or additional information regarding the Purdue study or the materials available through this website, contact Michelle Foley with the Communications Resources Team of the National FFA Organization, mfoley@ffa.org, 317-802-4253.